

VZCZCXYZ0009
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2544/01 3191214
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141214Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9158
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 4612
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 1219
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 4999
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5414
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4635
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3026
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5400
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2250
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0475
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 9210
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 6699
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1633
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5712
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7687
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0540
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0794
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002544

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

HaQaretz reported that DM Ehud Barak has approved dozens of

construction projects in the West Bank in recent months, contradicting Israel's commitments under the Roadmap. Barak also approved the marketing of hundreds of housing units in settlements. Some of the permits for construction projects were granted in settlements east of the separation fence, which are beyond the areas that the state defines as "settlement blocs," and which the state expects to retain under Israel's control following a permanent agreement with the Palestinians.

Major media printed a picture of President Bush and FM Tzipi Livni at UN Headquarters in New York yesterday. This will be the last time the two meet in their official capacities. Yediot reported that Bush wished Livni success in the elections. The Jerusalem Post reported that Livni thanked Bush for his peace efforts and for fighting terror.

HaQaretz noted that the continued fighting along the Gaza border is surprising because it contradicts Israeli intelligence forecasts, and seems to contradict both sides' direct interests. And yet, in the last 10 days the IDF killed 11 Palestinians in armed clashes, seven Israeli soldiers were wounded and at least 70 rockets and mortar shells landed in the Negev. Israel Radio reported that today an Israeli civilian was lightly injured by a rocket in Sderot and that rockets landed in Ashkelon. Leading media quoted Hamas spokesman Taher a-Nunu as saying yesterday that the escalation in violence between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza over the last week is an Israeli provocation aimed at increasing Barak's standings in the polls,.

Israel Radio quoted a member of European inspectors at the Rafah crossing as saying that there is now no supervision over the passage of persons at the crossing. The radio quoted force commander Maj. Gen. Pietro Pistolese as saying that it would be preferable if Egypt were a partner in operating the crossing.

HaQaretz reported that relations between Israel and Britain remained strained yesterday over Downing Street's intention to label products manufactured in West Bank settlements, a week before the expected arrival of British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, David Miliband, to the Middle East.

Maj. Gen. (res.) Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that Israel will not tolerate a nuclear Iran.

Yediot reported that yesterday in Tel Aviv, PM Ehud Olmert told ambassadors from the EU that Israel will conduct negotiations with Syria before the Israeli elections. The ultra-Orthodox Hamodia reported that Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan told President Peres that Israel should leave the door open to negotiations with Syria.

HaQaretz reported that Jerusalem Mayor-elect Nir Barkat has concluded a secret deal with the Ger (a.k.a. Gur) Hassids, who supported him during the municipal election campaign.

HaQaretz reported that, a few months after Hamas's 2006 election victory, leader Ismail Haniyeh tried to start a dialogue with President Bush. HaQaretz has obtained a written message from Haniyeh sent to Bush via Dr. Jerome Segal of the University of Maryland, who met with Haniyeh in Gaza. Haniyeh asked Bush to lift the boycott of the Hamas government and pressure Israel to maintain stability in the region.

Maariv quoted sources in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that the latest prisoner exchange deal with Hizbullah prevented the release of Gilad Shalit.

HaQaretz reported that members of the new left-wing bloc will run for the Knesset. The media reported on the dwindling strength of the Labor Party in Israeli politics. Prominent writer Amos Oz was quoted as saying on Israel Radio that Labor's historic role has ceased to exist. The media reported that the Likud primaries are set for December 8. The media reported that former Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz, a long-time member of the Labor Party, joined Likud yesterday. He is expected to seek the post of internal security minister.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Nawaf Mussawi (phon.), who is in charge of Hizbullah's foreign relations, as saying during a meeting with the Norwegian Ambassador in Lebanon that his organization demands that Israel withdraw from seven villages in the Galilee.

All media highlighted the expected government economic recovery plan. Maariv reported that pension plans will be further affected next week.

Israel Radio reported that the police will interrogate Olmert for a tenth time today.

HaQaretz (English Ed.) reported that the U.S. Democratic Party's local branch is embroiled in an internal power struggle involving accusations over an exit poll showing overwhelming support for Republican candidate John McCain in Israel.

HaQaretz (English Ed.) reported on the activity of a group of Israeli-Americans who model themselves on the NRA and are trying to ease restrictions on gun ownership in Israel.

I1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QEven if we assume that Olmert, the old fox, is playing a cynical game, in the end what he is saying is being etched in the public mind as an existential problem that cannot be solved by being swept under the rug.

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QIsrael does not intend to expand the tahdiya to the West Bank. Hamas does not intend to give up its efforts to approach the fence. This is the formula that is bringing the next round closer.

Block Quotes:

II. "Seeing Beyond the Skepticism"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/14): QEhud Olmert's remarks in his last few months in office about the territorial concessions he believes Israel must make to achieve peace wouldn't shame a dove like Yossi Beilin. At the opening of the winter session of the Knesset, he gave a speech that even Shimon Peres wouldn't have been ashamed of. In fact, it would have won him a knighthood from the Order of the Leftists. But the most left-wing speech of all was reserved for the state ceremony commemorating Yitzhak Rabin, in which Olmert called for a complete withdrawal from the territories and a return to the pre-1967 borders, including giving up Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Any future government will need to tell the truth, he said, and this truth will necessitate ripping away many portions of the homeland. There are quite a few people who think he is settling accounts with Livni this way, burdening her with missions that he believes her administration will never be able to carry out. They say he is banking on this specter of concessions to induce the Likudniks in Kadima to race back to Netanyahu's Likud, where there is lots of empty space and high hopes for victory.... [Some people say that] as a lame duck, he is now free to dig up every cliché about peace he can possibly find and to embarrass the next government. Personally, I am not joining the Olmert bashers, because the things he is saying are important and need to be said. His words, which are being recorded by our Arab neighbors, and which are seeping into the consciousness of the new U.S. administration and countries of Europe, are perceived as Israel's policy and aspiration. So even if we assume that Olmert, the old fox, is playing a cynical game, in the end what he is saying is being etched in the public mind as an existential problem that cannot be solved by being swept under the rug.

II. "To Be or not to Be"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/14): QSecurity officials in Israel realized -- very belatedly, but they realized--that Hamas means what it says when it declares that the tahdiya [lull] in its present format will end after six months, on December 19.... Hamas decided to test the IDF's threshold of reaction in advance of December 19. The goal: To accustom Israel to a daily level of terror attacks -- here a Qassam rocket, there a mortar shell-without having it react. Yesterday, Israel decided to react. It is not willing to accept Hamas on the fence. Four armed Palestinians who approached the fence were killed. The Southern Command was put on alert. The division commander was not replaced. Hamas -- whose self-confidence has grown greatly in the past six months -- returned to threatening severe terror attacks, including attacks that would be committed through Egypt. Israel does not intend to expand the tahdiya to the West Bank. Hamas does not intend to give up its efforts to approach the fence. This is the formula that is bringing the next round closer.

12. Iran:

Summary:

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: QIsrael will need to neutralize Iran's nuclear program before the Obama administration begins implementing America's new foreign policy.

Block Quotes:

"The Perils Ahead"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/14): QWhat is most alarming about Obama's emerging foreign policy toward Iran and its proxies on the one hand and Israel on the other is that it will cause actual harm to the Jewish state. By pressuring Israel to cede land to Syria and the Palestinians, Obama's apparent foreign policy will provide Iran with still more territory from which to attack Israel both through its terror proxies and with its expanding ballistic missile arsenal.... Over the past few years, Obama's top nuclear nonproliferation adviser, Joe Cirincione, has repeatedly advocated placing Israel's nuclear arsenal on the negotiating table and offering it up in exchange for an Iranian pledge to end its nuclear program.... All of the Obama team's post-election/pre-inaugural foreign policy signals place Israel's next government --Q which will only be elected on February 10 Q in an extraordinary difficult position. It is not just that their positions make clear that the Obama administration will do nothing to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The Obama team's pre-inaugural signals indicate strongly that Israel's next government will need to strike Iran's nuclear installations before two rapidly approaching deadlines. The strike will have to occur before the mullahs enrich sufficient quantities of highly enriched uranium to produce nuclear bombs. And Israel will need to neutralize Iran's nuclear program before the Obama administration begins implementing America's new foreign policy.

13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QRecently, a new Jewish lobby has been formed, J Street, which proposes a left-wing liberal alternative to AIPAC.... It is good to hear a new voice emanating from the American Jewish community.

Block Quotes:

"Welcoming a New Jewish Voice"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (11/14): QIn the past, Israel has not made do with its leaders' persuasive efforts to ward off U.S. pressure. It tended to recruit an aggressive, powerful Jewish lobby to assist it: the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Over the years, this organization became not only the lobbying extension of Israel's policy -- but in many cases it forged its own independent policy, usually with a right-wing agenda, which posited that renouncing the territories posed a threat to Israel's existence. This lobby, known for its pro-Israel activity, managed to create the illusion that American Jews spoke with one voice, and that this voice spoke exclusively and automatically for the Jewish right wing and Israeli government. Recently, a new Jewish lobby has been formed, J Street, which proposes a left-wing liberal alternative to AIPAC. This is important news to both peace supporters in Israel and the U.S. Jewish community.... Israel should not have to decide which lobby represents it, and America's Jews do not need Israel's permission to voice the range of its opinions. Ultimately, the policy of Israel's government, which was elected by its citizens, is the one that should determine its relationships with its neighbors and with the U.S. This said, it is good to hear a new voice emanating from the American Jewish community.

CUNNINGHAM